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ACLU Applauds Rescheduling of Marijuana, dropping lawsuit

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DES MOINES - The ACLU Foundation of Iowa [ACLU of Iowa], announces today, that it will likely drop its lawsuit seeking rescheduling of marijuana by the Iowa Pharmacy Board in response to the board's decision today to voluntarily recommend that marijuana be moved from Schedule I to Schedule II of Iowa's controlled substances act.

By moving marijuana into schedule II, the Pharmacy Board acknowledged that marijuana has potential medical use. On schedule II marijuana joins opiates and other drugs known to have medical utility, but which also have a high potential for abuse. Doctors will not be able to prescribe marijuana however, because of federal restrictions.

Members of the board expressed hope that the move to schedule II would allow researchers to study marijuana more closely and develop more effective medications based on its well known pharmacological effects.

Along with its recommendation to the legislature for rescheduling of marijuana, the board also called for an interdisciplinary study committee appointed by the legislature to make decisions about how medical marijuana could be distributed and managed.

The ACLU of Iowa has supported sensible drug law reform including medical marijuana. "We need to stop charging cancer patients with drug possession charges and stop letting law enforcement officials dictate the bounds of medical treatment" said Randall Wilson, Legal director of the ACLU of Iowa. Wilson is the attorney who brought suit last year against the pharmacy board in an attempt to force logical treatment of the substance under Iowa's controlled substances act.

Plaintiffs in the case include George McMahon, and Barbara Douglass, two of the last people in the country to be enrolled in the federal government's Compassionate Use and Investigational Drug program which provided them each with monthly shipments of marijuana cigarettes to alleviate their extreme medical conditions. Wilson indicated that dismissal of the case would have to await consultation with his clients and follow through on the board's decision.

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